



THE DELAWARE RIVER AND BAY AUTHORITY

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January 27, 2009

The Honorable Frank LoBiondo
U.S. Congressman
2427 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Subject Matter: Safe Navigation of the Cape May Canal, Cape May, New Jersey

Dear Congressman LoBiondo:

On behalf of the Delaware River and Bay Authority (DRBA), I would like to take this opportunity to request your assistance to ensure that adequate funding is provided to the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to execute the required maintenance dredging of the Cape May navigation channel. This maintenance dredging is vital to the safe operation of the Cape May – Lewes Ferry, which connects Cape May, New Jersey and Lewes, Delaware.

Mr. John Jones, DRBA Director of Engineering and Maintenance, contacted the Philadelphia District Office of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) last week to express his concern about the situation and the need to perform maintenance dredging in the Cape May Canal between our Cape May turning basin and the breakwater. The USACE Chief of Operations was supportive and clearly understood the issues, but indicated that there was no funding to perform the inter-coastal maintenance dredging. Due to the Cape May – Lewes Ferry's important regional public transportation mission, the USACE considers the area of the Cape May canal important and has requested funding for inter-coastal maintenance dredging in this area via the on-going Economic Stimulus initiative. The estimated cost to undertake and complete the maintenance dredging is \$850,000.

The west end of the Cape May Canal is a critical area that shoals annually and must be dredged every spring. Annual funding at this location is an absolute necessity and must be maintained. During the past few years, a couple of incidences have reinforced that notion. On June 10, 2007, the M/V Twin Capes, a shallow draft ferry vessel, carrying many passengers and vehicles from Lewes, DE to Cape May, NJ touched bottom while entering the Cape May Canal. On April 23, 2003, a similar situation occurred; however, the vessel ran aground this time, stranding more than 200 passengers and their vehicles. A marine salvage company responded to rescue the vessel. As a result of non-maintenance of the federal navigation channel, the Authority's ferry service and the nearly one million customers it serves each year may be at risk.

It is essential that immediate action be taken to secure the necessary funding to complete this maintenance dredging this year and beyond. This situation is serious and poses impacts to a vital transportation and economic link between the southern portions of Delaware and New Jersey. Thank you for your support and necessary action. Should you have any questions, please contact the undersigned at 302.571.6301.

Sincerely,



James T. Johnson, Jr.
Executive Director
Delaware River and Bay Authority

- c: Don Raineau, Deputy Executive Director, Delaware River and Bay Authority
CAPT David Scott, United States Coast Guard, Sector Delaware Bay
BG Todd Semonite, Commander, USACE, North Atlantic Division
LTC Thomas J. Tickner, Commander, Philadelphia District
James Walls, COO, Delaware River and Bay Authority
John Jones, Director of Engineering and Maintenance, DRBA